



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO MEDIA ADVISORY

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **COUNTY ALERTS GARDENERS ABOUT TOMATO-KILLING VIRUS** ***Virus Detected for the First Time in California, But Has Yet to Appear in San Diego***

Tomato Yellow Leaf Curl Virus has devastated tomato plants in the Southern United States, Mexico, and the Caribbean and has now been discovered in California. Tomatoes at an Imperial County greenhouse were destroyed after the virus was spotted in March. Officials do not know how the virus got there, but they do warn consumers about the risk of buying infected plants.

"If you buy plants through the Internet from other states, you may inadvertently transport new diseases into California," said County Agricultural Commissioner Bob Atkins. "Buy plants sold at your local nursery. They are best suited for our climate and have been screened for exotic diseases."

The virus is spread by a whitefly, an insect common in San Diego County. In addition to tomatoes, the virus can infect other plants including peppers, petunias and several weed species.

County officials said there is no cure for the disease, and infected plants must be destroyed. However, controlling whiteflies can help prevent the disease from spreading in the garden.

Before you buy plants or fruit from out of state, including purchases over the Internet, please contact the County Agricultural Commissioner at (858) 694-8988.

For additional gardening information, call the Master Gardener program at (858) 694-2860, or visit the County Department of Agriculture, Weights and Measures Web site at [www.sdcawm.org](http://www.sdcawm.org) or the County Farm and Home Advisor at [www.sdcfha.org](http://www.sdcfha.org).

***EDITOR'S NOTE: Agricultural Commissioner Bob Atkins is available for interviews. Photos of the pest and tomato plant damage are also available. Video of a nursery inspection and an interview with a Master Gardener in a vegetable garden can be arranged.***

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